

NSC BRIEFING

13 April 1958

KHRUSHCHEV'S VISIT TO HUNGARY

I. The visit had three main purposes:

A. Khrushchev wished to show the Hungarians that Kadar has his full backing. In so doing, he made a mockery of alleged Soviet non-interference in Satellite internal affairs.

1. He said of Kadar and his associates that "these are loyal Communists....They do not grovel for the friendship of those who would like to throw them some of their stale goods in order to sow discord between them and the Soviet Union."--An obvious reference to the Yugoslavs and the Poles.

2. Khrushchev also assured the Hungarians that Rakosi was not coming back, although he categorically branded Nagy as a traitor.

B. Secondly he wanted to emphasize that the status of the Satellites is not a subject for consideration at the Summit--or by the UN--by demonstrating that the Hungarian people support Kadar and that Hungary is a normal Satellite.

C. Finally, Khrushchev apparently hoped that his personal magnetism would improve Hungarian-Soviet relations.

II. Khrushchev's initial remarks were therefore pitched in a firm but conciliatory tone.

A. Just prior to the visit, he told Hammarskjold that he felt confident the trip would show that he was not unpopular in Hungary.

B. In his speeches he went to great lengths to justify Soviet intervention in the uprising and emphasized the alleged agony the Soviet leaders had suffered before taking the decision to send in troops.

1. In the opinion of Ambassador Thompson in Moscow the tone of Khrushchev's statements reflected, if not a guilty conscience, the realization that the standard bloc line on the Hungarian revolution was not very convincing.

III. The icy indifference of the Hungarians must have shattered his illusions.

A. The US Legation in Budapest notes that Western observers have been impressed by the coldness of the reception given him by ordinary Hungarians.

1. For example, during one speech, the audience melted away whenever they were not prevented by the guards.

B. His first reaction to this treatment, as the US Legation noted a few days later, was resort to a pleading, almost apologetic, tone.

1. He described, for example, how he and his colleagues had "spent sleepless days and nights" trying to make the decision to intervene, because "we saw that there were workers among the counterrevolutionaries."

2. And in another impromptu speech he said Hungarians could not depend on Soviet assistance if another attempted Putsch occurred in future, implying--perhaps unintentionally--that the USSR would not intervene in another crisis.

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C. He changed his approach, however, a few days later, when he made a violent attack on the Western press for distorting his previous remarks and belligerently affirmed that the USSR would intervene in the event of another uprising.

1. The US legation believes that since the Hungarian people had learned of his earlier off-the-cuff remarks, although they were not publicized by Moscow or Budapest, Khrushchev felt obliged to make such an explanation.
2. In his second correcting speech Khrushchev asserted that the forces of the entire socialist camp would be available to quell another uprising; he further warned the West--using Stalin's own words--"not to stick your pig's snout into our socialist garden."

D. He made his final speech to the workers at Csepel island--they were among the leaders in the revolution. In this speech Khrushchev again adopted a tough approach; he did not, however, permit Western reporters to attend.

1. He ordered the party to use "merciless hard, quick and firm force," a quote stolen from Lenin's orders in 1919 to the Hungarian communist revolutionaries.

IV. Khrushchev's conduct will not change the basic situation in Hungary; it may, however, have certain consequences for Hungarian party leaders.

A. Khrushchev's vigorous endorsement of Kadar will greatly strengthen the latter's position within the party but, in the context of Khrushchev's other remarks, it will strongly detract from Kadar's pose of being a moderate; it will also

B. Khrushchev showed signs of wear and tear in a speech given upon his return to Moscow; it was one of his most rambling and disconnected performances.

1. Clearly he was not in a happy frame of mind and we think that he must feel, as we do, that for all his frantic efforts the trip was something of a fiasco.